



PUBLIC SCOPING NOTICE FOR THE STIBNITE GOLD PROJECT

DISTRICT: Payette National Forest, Krassel Ranger District and
Boise National Forest, Cascade Ranger District

PROJECT NAME: Stibnite Gold Project Environmental Impact Statement

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Keith Lannom, Payette National Forest Supervisor

PROJECT CONTACT: Brian Harris, Public Affairs Officer, 1-208-634-0784 or
bdharris@fs.fed.us

SCOPING PERIOD: Comments requested by July 20, 2017

SUBMIT COMMENTS: Preferred via webform on the project webpage

PROJECT WEBSITE: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold>

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NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The following information is derived from the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, which is anticipated to be published in the federal register notice on June 2, 2017.

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SUMMARY:

The Payette National Forest (PNF) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate and disclose the potential environmental effects from: (1) Approval of the “Stibnite Gold Project Plan of Restoration and Operations” (Plan) submitted by Midas Gold Idaho, Inc. (Midas Gold) in September 2016, to occupy and use National Forest System (NFS) lands for operations associated with open-pit mining and ore processing; and (2) related amendments to the Payette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Payette Forest Plan, 2003) and/or the Boise National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Boise Forest Plan, as amended in 2010).

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will cooperate on the preparation of the EIS and evaluate its content to ensure that the EIS can be adopted by the USACE to support an eventual decision to either issue, issue with conditions, or deny a Department of the Army Permit

under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) for the Plan. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will cooperate on the preparation of the EIS and evaluate its content to ensure that the EIS can be adopted in support of the decision-making process for issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit under Section 402 of the CWA.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received within 45 days from date of publication in the Federal Register.

ADDRESSES: Webform submission of comments is encouraged. Comments can be submitted via the project webpage at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold> by selecting the ‘Comment on Project’ link on the right side of the page. Written comments may also be sent to Payette National Forest, ATTN: Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom – Stibnite Gold EIS, 500 N. Mission St., Bldg 2, McCall, Idaho 83638. Comments may also be sent via email with a subject line reading “Stibnite Gold EIS Scoping Comment” to comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us or via facsimile (FAX) to 1-208-634-0744. Additional information regarding submittal of comments is provided below in the Scoping Process section. Written comments may also be submitted during public scoping meetings that will be held by the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service), as follows:

- June 27, 2017, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., Ashley Inn, Cascade, Idaho
- June 28, 2017, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., Payette Forest Supervisor’s Office, McCall, Idaho
- June 29, 2017, 1:00 – 3:00 and 5:00 – 7:00 PM, Holiday Inn Express and Suites (Airport), Boise, Idaho

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Harris, Public Affairs Officer, at 1-208-634-0784 or bdharris@fs.fed.us.

Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Stibnite Gold Project (Project) is located in both the PNF and BNF. The PNF will be the lead unit for processing and administering the Plan on NFS lands.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the Forest Service’s action is to provide for approval of the Plan, which would govern occupancy and use of NFS lands for operations that are reasonably incident to mining. To provide for such approval, the Responsible Official needs to determine whether

reasonable changes or additions to the Plan are necessary in order to meet the requirements of regulations set forth in 36 CFR 228 Subpart A and other applicable laws, regulations, or policies, prior to approval.

Midas Gold submitted a plan of operations for mining on NFS lands, titled “Stibnite Gold Plan of Restoration and Operations” (Plan) to the Forest Service in September 2016, in accordance with Forest Service regulations for locatable minerals set forth at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 Subpart A. In order to comply with its statutory and regulatory obligations to respond to the Plan submitted by Midas Gold, the Forest Service must: (1) evaluate the Plan; (2) consider requirements set forth at 36 CFR 228.8, including those to minimize adverse effects to the extent feasible, comply with applicable laws, regulations, and standards for environmental protection, and provide for reclamation; and (3) respond to the Plan as set forth at 36 CFR 228.5(a). The Responsible Official determined the Plan to be administratively complete in December 2016. Approval of the Plan and issuance of permits under the CWA would be major federal actions subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Accordingly, the federal land management and regulatory agencies must also prepare an EIS to consider and publicly disclose the potential environmental effects of the proposed action.

Proposed Action

The Responsible Official proposes to approve the Plan submitted by Midas Gold, with any modifications determined necessary through the analysis to comply with applicable laws and regulations. USACE would review the Plan and EIS for purposes of evaluating Midas Gold’s application for a Department of the Army Permit under Section 404 of the CWA. EPA would review the Plan and EIS for purposes of evaluating Midas Gold’s application for a related NPDES Permit under Section 402 of the CWA. As described in the Plan, the Project would affect federal, state, and private lands. The proposed action by the Forest Service would only authorize approval of mining-related operations on NFS lands, because the Forest Service does not have jurisdiction to regulate mining operations that occur on private or state land. However, the EIS will consider and disclose environmental effects of mining-related operations that would occur on private and state lands. Connected actions related to the Plan, including but not necessarily limited to CWA permitting by USACE and EPA and related amendments of the Payette and Boise Forest Plans, will be considered. Impacts of past, present, ongoing, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the Project area will be considered in combination with the impacts of the Project to estimate the potential cumulative impacts of Project implementation.

Project Location

The Project area is located in the upper East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River (EFSFSR) drainage, approximately 44 air miles northeast of the City of Cascade and three miles west of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in Valley County, Idaho. Operations would impact approximately 500 acres of patented mining claims owned or controlled by Midas

Gold and approximately 1,500 acres of federal public lands comprised of adjacent NFS lands administered by the PNF and two supporting-infrastructure corridors located primarily in the BNF. Parts of the Project area, such as the Stibnite mine site, have been impacted by historic mining and ore processing operations. Some of these impacts have been remediated, but legacy mining impacts remain.

Project Description

Midas Gold's stated objective is to economically develop and operate a modern mine, while providing environmental restoration of impacts related to historic mining activities at the site and socioeconomic benefits in surrounding areas. Midas Gold's Plan includes descriptions of the following operations and activities to be conducted on a mixture of NFS, State, and private lands:

- **Redevelopment and Construction (2 to 3 years):** Developing supporting infrastructure, including upgraded and reconstructed powerline, communication sites, upgraded and/or new roads (including a long-term, temporary mine access and public by-pass route), maintenance facility, and onsite housing, oxygen plant, and water management infrastructure; relocation and reuse of spent ore and construction of a lined tailings storage facility; modifying stream channels to reduce sedimentation and restore wetland function and fish passage (including temporarily rerouting the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River [EFSFSR] through a fish-passable tunnel); planting burned areas; initial mining of one open pit (which will require closure of the Stibnite road through the mine site); and constructing development rock storage and temporary ore stockpile facilities, crusher, and ore processing facilities.
- **Mining and Ore Processing (12 to 15 years):** Resuming mining from two historical and one new open pit at a rate of approximately 40,000 to 100,000 tons of material per day; processing up to 25,000 tons per day of ore to recover gold/silver doré and antimony concentrate; historical tailings reprocessing and clean-up; placing neutralized new and reprocessed tailings in the tailings storage facility; placing development rock in four engineered facilities, backfilling Yellow Pine pit; and concurrent reconstruction of stream channels, riparian areas, wetlands, and upland habitat, including restoring the EFSFSR to its approximate original gradient across the backfilled Yellow Pine pit.
- **Initial Closure and Reclamation (2 to 3 years):** Removing structures and facilities; decommissioning temporary roads; recontouring and drainage; additional wetland mitigations; reconstructing various stream channels in the project area and reopening the Stibnite Road through the mine site; and growth media placement and revegetation.
- **Post-Closure and Monitoring (5 to 7 years):** Establishing a wetland on top of the tailings storage facility; reclaiming rock storage facilities; monitoring reclamation and remediation projects.

The Plan includes operational standards and practices to minimize, mitigate or eliminate the potential for negative impacts and environmental monitoring to document compliance and to facilitate adaptive management through the redevelopment, mining, reclamation, and post-closure periods.

An initial review of the consistency of the Plan with both the Payette and Boise Forest Plans indicates that approval of the Plan as submitted would result in conditions that are inconsistent with the forest plans. Amendments to the forest plans may be required to address inconsistencies with Forest Plan standards including standards for recreation, roadless areas, vegetation, visual quality, and wildlife.

Possible Alternatives

The EIS will disclose the effects of the no-action alternative, which, while not within the Responsible Official's discretion, would provide a baseline against which action alternatives can be compared, and the proposed action, approval of Midas Gold's Plan. Additional alternatives and Project design features may be evaluated in the EIS. Alternatives and design features determined reasonable and necessary to meet Forest Service regulations for locatable minerals set forth at 36 CFR 228 Subpart A may require changes and/or additions to the Plan. Further information regarding the nature of the decision(s) to be made is presented in the following section.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies

The Forest Service will be the lead agency preparing the EIS. Currently, five Cooperating agencies have been identified, they are:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources

Responsible Official

The Forest Supervisor of the PNF has been delegated authority for decisions related to the Plan on the BNF and will be the Responsible Official who prepares the record of decision (ROD) necessary to approve the portions of the Plan on NFS lands. USACE and EPA will prepare final decisions for their respective permitting action(s).

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The Responsible Official will consider the beneficial and adverse impacts of each alternative. With respect to the portions of the Plan on NFS lands, the Forest Service Responsible Official has discretion to determine whether changes in, or additions to, the Plan will be required prior to approval. However, the Responsible Official cannot categorically prohibit operations that are reasonably incident to mining of locatable minerals on NFS lands in the area of the proposed Plan.

Using the analysis in the EIS and supporting documentation, the Forest Service Responsible Official will make the following decisions regarding the Plan:

1. Decide whether to approve the Plan as submitted by Midas Gold, or to require changes or additions to the Plan to meet the requirements for environmental protection and reclamation set forth at 36 CFR 228 Subpart A before approving a final Plan. The Forest Service decision may be to approve a plan of operations composed of elements from one or more of the alternatives considered. The alternative that is selected for approval in the final Plan must minimize adverse impacts on NFS surface resources to the extent feasible.
2. Decide whether to approve amendments to the forest plans, if required in order to approve the final Plan.
3. Decide whether and/or how to mitigate the effects of the proposed mining operation to existing public motorized access.

FINAL EIS AND RECORD OF DECISION

The Forest Service would release a draft ROD in conjunction with the final EIS. The draft ROD would address approval of the Plan, and any related project-specific Forest Plan or Travel Plan amendments that may be required. The draft decision would be subject to 36 CFR 218, "Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process." Depending on the nature of the forest plan amendments required, the draft decisions may also be subject to 36 CFR 219 Subpart B, "Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process."

Following resolution of objections to the draft ROD, a final ROD would be issued. As the operator, Midas Gold would have an opportunity to appeal the decision as set forth at 36 CFR 214, "Postdecisional Administrative Review Process for Occupancy and Use of National Forest System Lands and Resources."

Prior to approval of the Plan, Midas Gold may be required to modify the September 2016 Plan to comply with the description of the selected alternative in the final ROD. In addition, the PNF Forest Supervisor would require Midas Gold to submit a reclamation bond or provide proof of

other acceptable financial assurance to ensure that NFS lands and resources involved with the mining operation are reclaimed in accordance with the approved Plan and Forest Service requirements for environmental protection (36 CFR 228.8 and 228.13). After the Forest Service has determined that the Plan conforms to the ROD as well as other regulatory requirements, including acceptance of financial assurance for reclamation, it would approve the Plan. Implementation of mining operations that affect NFS lands and resources may not commence until the reclamation bond or other financial assurance is in place and a plan of operations is approved.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Issues to be analyzed in the EIS will be developed during this scoping process. Preliminary issues expected to be analyzed include potential impacts to: access and transportation; aesthetics and visual resources; botanical resources, including wetlands and threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species; climate and air quality; cultural and heritage resources (including Tribal treaty and trust responsibilities); environmental justice; federal land management and environmental protection; fire and fuels management; fisheries and wildlife, including threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species; geochemistry; geology; hazardous materials; land use; long-term, post-closure site management; noise; public health and safety; recreation; roadless and wilderness resources; socioeconomics; soils and reclamation cover materials; timber resources; water resources (groundwater and surface water); and water rights.

PERMITS OR LICENSES REQUIRED

Aspects of the Plan will also require other permitting, including by the Idaho Departments of Lands, Environmental Quality, and Water Resources.

SCOPING PROCESS

This notice of intent initiates the scoping (public involvement) process, which guides the development of the EIS. Public comments may be submitted to the PNF in a variety of ways, including: via the project Website, via email, by mail, and via FAX. In addition, the PNF will conduct scoping meetings, during which members of the public can learn about the Forest Service proposed action and the NEPA process and submit written comments. Comments sought by the PNF include comments specific to the proposed action, information that could be pertinent to analysis of environmental effects, identification of significant issues, and identification of potential alternatives.

Written comments may be sent to: Payette National Forest, ATTN: Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom - Stibnite Gold EIS, 500 N. Mission St., Bldg 2, McCall, ID 83638. Comments may also be sent via email with a Subject Line reading "Stibnite Gold EIS Scoping Comment" to

comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us, submitted via Web site at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold>, or sent via FAX to 1-208-634-0744.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to preparation of the EIS. Therefore, to be most useful, comments should be provided prior to the close of the scoping comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, without an associated name and address, receiving further correspondences concerning the proposed action will not be possible and those individuals will not have standing for objection.

SCOPING MEETING DISPLAY BOARDS

The following pages present the 13 display boards that will be presented at the public scoping meetings.

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Stibnite Gold Project

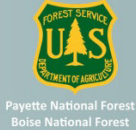


Welcome!

Welcome to the public scoping meeting for the **Stibnite Gold Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**.

While you are here, please take time to learn about the proposed project, ask questions, and discuss your concerns with the Forest Service project manager and resource specialists involved with this project.

Written comments are requested by **July 20, 2017**.



Stibnite Gold Project



Forest Service Proposed Action and Purpose and Need

In September 2016, Midas Gold submitted to the U. S. Forest Service (Forest Service) a Plan of Restoration and Operations (Plan) to occupy and use National Forest System (NFS) lands in both the Payette National Forest (PNF) and the Boise National Forest (BNF) for operations associated with open-pit mining and ore processing. In order to comply with its statutory and regulatory obligations, the Forest Service must evaluate and respond to the Plan with consideration of applicable laws, regulations, and standards for environmental protection and reclamation.

Forest Service Proposed Action: The PNF proposes to approve the Plan, with any modifications determined necessary through the analysis to comply with applicable laws and regulations. The Proposed Action by the Forest Service would only authorize approval of mining-related operations on NFS lands, because the Forest Service does not have jurisdiction to regulate mining operations that occur on private or state land.

Forest Service Purpose and Need: The **purpose** is to provide for approval of a Plan, which would govern occupancy and use of NFS lands for operations that are reasonably incident to mining. To provide for such approval, the Forest Service **needs** to determine whether reasonable changes or additions to the Plan are necessary in order to meet the requirements of regulations set forth in 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 Subpart A and other applicable laws, regulations, or policies, prior to approval.



Stibnite Gold Project



Agency Roles and Responsibilities

The Forest Service will evaluate and disclose the potential environmental impacts of Midas Gold's Plan in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The **PNF is the Lead Agency** with responsibility for preparing the EIS.

Lead Agency responsibilities and decisions include the following:

- Conformance determination of the Plan (and alternatives) with the Payette and Boise National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plans;
- Adequacy of the EIS to reach an informed decision regarding the Plan and alternatives;
- Approval of the Plan, a different alternative, or a combination of alternatives;
- Conditions of Approval that may be attached to the Record of Decision (ROD); and
- Any related permitting (e.g. special uses).

Cooperating Agencies are government agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise on issues addressed in the EIS. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) will be cooperating agencies on the EIS. Each agency has special expertise and/or jurisdiction over permits that will be required for operation of the project. Other agencies or governmental entities may join as cooperators during the NEPA process. Federal permits required include a Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404 permit to fill waters of the United States (issued by the USACE); and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) CWA section 402 permit (issued by the EPA).



Stibnite Gold Project



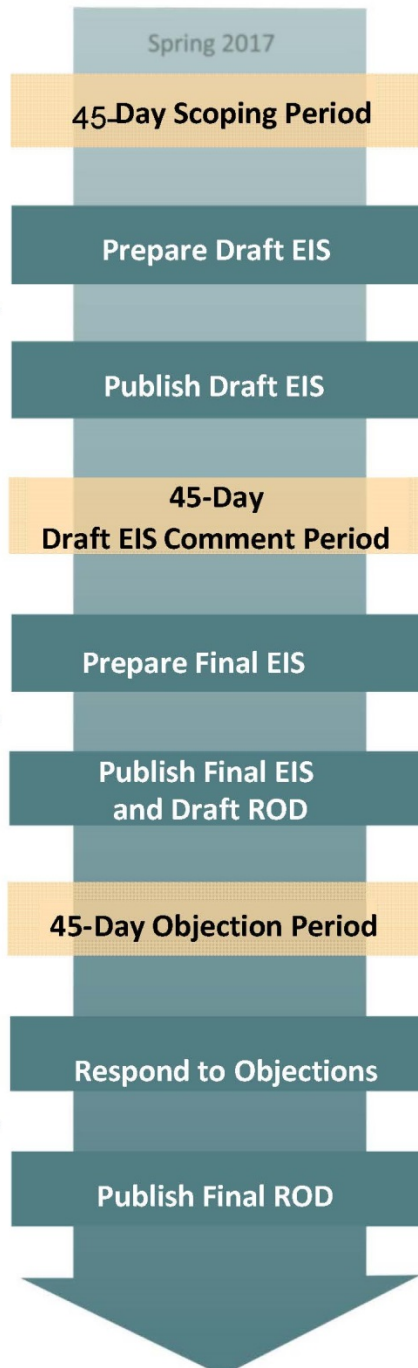
NEPA Process

Forest Service actions

The **Draft EIS** will:
1) identify different alternatives that meet the purpose and need while addressing resource conflicts;
2) disclose the effects of each alternative on the natural and human environment; and
3) identify mitigation that may be applied to reduce impacts.

The **Final EIS** will include all public comments and Forest Service's responses to the comments, and will disclose the Agency-preferred Alternative. The **Draft ROD** will disclose the proposed decision on which alternative analyzed in the EIS may be implemented, as well as any Conditions of Approval.

The Forest Service will release the **Final ROD** after responding to all objections.



Public Outreach opportunities

During **Public Scoping**, the public provides input regarding project and resource concerns. This input is used to identify issues to be addressed through alternatives development or EIS analysis.

The Draft EIS public comment period will allow for public comment on the proposed action and alternatives and the analysis contained in the EIS document.

The Objection period provides an opportunity for all interested and affected parties who provided written comment during scoping or the Draft EIS comment period to provide comments regarding the proposed decision.



Stibnite Gold Project



Project Description

Midas Gold's Plan of Restoration and Operations (Plan) to redevelop and mine the historically impacted Stibnite, Idaho, mine site includes descriptions of the following operations and activities to be implemented on a mixture of NFS, State, and private lands:

- Redevelopment and Construction (2 to 3 years):** Developing supporting infrastructure (including powerline, communication sites, roads, maintenance facility, and onsite housing, oxygen plant, and water management infrastructure); relocation and reuse of spent ore and construction of a lined tailings storage facility; modifying stream channels to reduce sedimentation and restore wetland function/fish passage (including temporarily rerouting the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River [EFSFSR] through a fish-passable tunnel); planting burned areas; initial mining of one open pit (which will require closure of the Stibnite road through the mine site); and developing rock storage facilities, temporary ore stockpile facilities, crusher, and ore processing facilities.
- Mining and Ore Processing (12 to 15 years):** Resuming mining from two historical and one new open pit at a rate of approximately 40,000 to 100,000 tons of material per day; processing up to 25,000 tons per day of ore to recover gold/, silver dorè and antimony concentrate; historical tailings reprocessing and clean-up; placing neutralized new and reprocessed tailings in the tailings storage facility; placing development rock in four engineered facilities, backfilling Yellow Pine pit; and concurrent reconstruction of stream channels, riparian areas, wetlands and upland habitat, including restoring the EFSFSR to its approximate original gradient across the backfilled Yellow Pine pit.
- Initial Closure and Reclamation (2 to 3 years):** Removing structures and facilities; decommissioning temporary roads; recontouring and drainage; additional wetland mitigations; reconstructing the Stibnite Road and various stream channels in the project area; and growth media placement and revegetation.
- Post-Closure and Monitoring (5 to 7 years):** Establishing a wetland on top of the tailings storage facility; reclaiming rock storage facilities; monitoring reclamation and remediation projects.

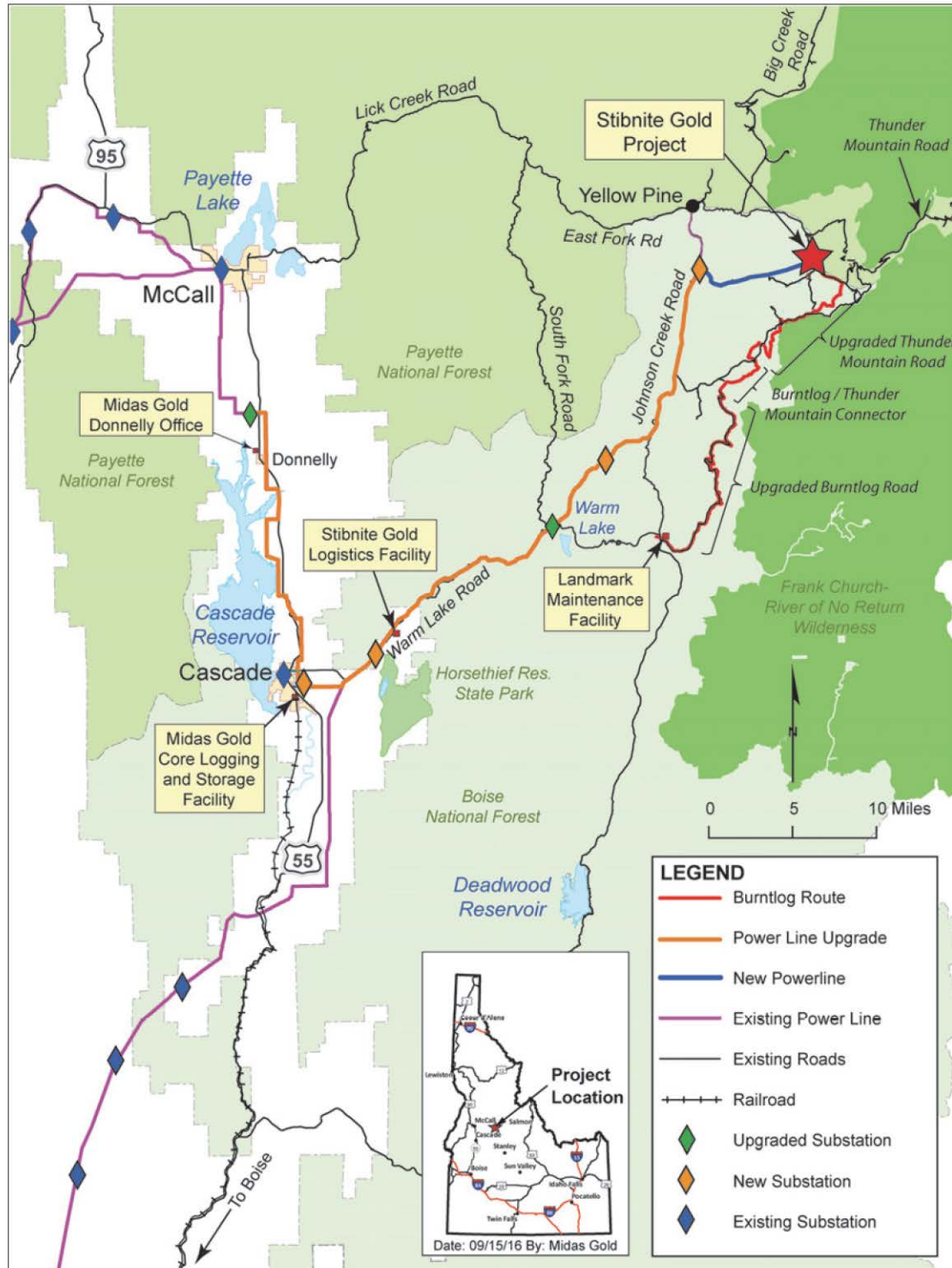
The Plan includes operational standards and practices to minimize, mitigate or eliminate the potential for negative impacts and environmental monitoring to document compliance and facilitate adaptive management through the redevelopment, mining, reclamation, and post-closure periods.



Stibnite Gold Project



Project Area Overview





Stibnite Gold Project



Water Resources

The project area includes eight named perennial tributaries of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River (EFSFSR): Meadow Creek, East Fork Meadow Creek (also known as Blowout Creek), Fiddle Creek, Garnet Creek, Midnight Creek, Lower Sugar Creek (also known as Hennessy Creek), Rabbit Creek, and West End Creek. Baseline studies have identified 323 acres of wetlands within the project area.

Groundwater occurs primarily in alluvial sediments in the Meadow Creek and EFSFSR valley floors. Artesian conditions have been encountered in fault zones in the Yellow Pine and West End pit areas.

Midas Gold holds both established and temporary water rights in the project area and plans to secure additional groundwater water rights to support ore processing and potable water supply during the life of the Project and plans to mitigate wetland impacts. Midas Gold also plans to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for three different discharges to waters of the U.S. and a Department of Army 404 permit (to fill waters of the US).

EIS Analysis Considerations

- Examine variations in groundwater pumping to dewater the mine pits by alternative
- Evaluate groundwater drawdown and water management effects to groundwater, surface waters, and aquatic habitat based on groundwater modeling results
- Assess potential impacts to groundwater and surface water quality
- Evaluate water use in relation to established and proposed water rights



Stibnite Gold Project



Wildlife and Aquatic Resources

Wildlife

There is suitable habitat in the project area for the federally-listed Canada lynx, and 19 Forest Service-sensitive species (white-headed woodpecker, American three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, fisher, flammulated owl, great gray owl, northern goshawk, pileated woodpecker, mountain quail, wolverine [candidate species for ESA listing], gray wolf, mule deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain elk, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, bald eagle, Columbian spotted frog and harlequin duck). Field investigations recorded evidence of three individual wolverines, but found no evidence of Canada lynx or fisher.

EIS Analysis Considerations

The Forest Service will prepare a Biological Assessment (BA)/ Biological Evaluation (BE) for listed or sensitive species. Issues to be addressed in the EIS and BA/BE:

- What effects would habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and noise have on wildlife and aquatic resources, including migratory birds and special status species?
- Would the post-mining pit lakes pose a risk to terrestrial and/or aquatic biota?
- How effective would the applicant-committed environmental protection measures (such as reclamation) be in minimizing impacts? Would additional mitigation measures be needed?

Aquatic Resources

There are three federally listed fish species in the project area, the Columbia River bull trout, Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, and Snake River Basin steelhead, and one Forest Service-sensitive species (Westslope cutthroat trout). Several streams in the project area are Essential Fish Habitat for anadromous species and designated Critical Habitat for Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Other fish species present include mountain whitefish, sculpin, longnose dace, largescale sucker, and brook trout.



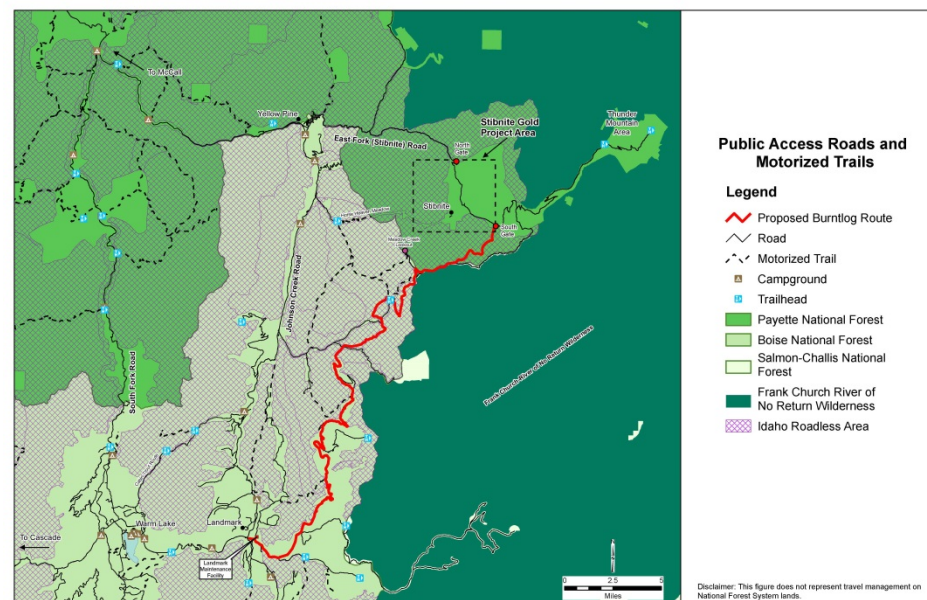
Stibnite Gold Project



Transportation and Public Access

The project site is currently accessible through Yellow Pine via Johnson Creek or the South Fork and East Fork South Fork and Stibnite Roads. Midas Gold's Plan includes the following changes to transportation routes and public access:

- Upgrading and extending the Burntlog road to the mine site.
- Closing Stibnite Road just above Sugar Creek at the north end of the project area during active operations
- Connecting Horse Heaven/powerline road to Meadow Creek lookout as a motorized trail
- Plowing Warm Lake Road to Landmark and the Burntlog route to the project site
- Grooming Cabin Creek/Trout Creek trail to provide public winter access to Landmark



- Reclaiming/decommissioning the Burntlog route and re-opening public access from Yellow Pine on the Stibnite Road through the reclaimed mine site.

EIS Analysis Considerations

How would the project affect public access in and near the project area? How would the project affect traffic, road integrity, and access in and around the project area? What actions can be incorporated to reduce traffic-related impacts such as dust, sediment and greenhouse gases generated by vehicles, and minimize the risk of accidents along the route?



Stibnite Gold Project



Recreation and Visual Resources, Roadless Areas and Wilderness

Recreation Resources: The project area supports low to moderate dispersed recreation, including hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and sightseeing (interpretive signage at Stibnite describing mining history). Many users, including permitted outfitters and their clients, drive through the area to use the adjacent Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area, especially during big-game hunting seasons. Most trails in the area are open to some form of motorized recreation.

Visual Resources: Most of the area is managed with a visual quality objective (VQO) of “retention” and “partial retention” (“retention” refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character “appears” intact; “partial retention” refers to landscapes where the valued landscape characters “appear slightly altered”).

EIS Analysis Considerations

The EIS will examine impacts to access, seasonal and year-round recreation opportunities, visual resources, and wilderness characteristics. It will also analyze and disclose any project-level Forest and/or Travel Plan amendments that may be required to approve Midas Gold’s Plan. Forest Service may consider alternatives or design features that would require changes or additions to the Plan in order to comply with applicable law, regulation and/or policy.

Inventoried Roadless Areas and Designated Wilderness: An **inventoried roadless area (IRA)** is specifically defined as an area that meets the minimum criteria for wilderness as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and Forest Service guidelines. Areas designated as **Wilderness** have management objectives for preserving their wilderness attributes, which include natural integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, special features or values, and wilderness manageability and boundaries.

There are eight IRAs located in and adjacent to the project area; additional IRAs are located along or near the proposed power transmission corridor. The Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness is located three (3) miles to the east of the project area. The Burntlog route is adjacent to the Wilderness Area.



Stibnite Gold Project



Other Resource Issues

Other key resource issues to be examined in the EIS include:

Air Quality and Climate: How would the project impact air quality in the project vicinity and region? What would be the contribution to mercury emissions and deposition and emission of other hazardous air pollutants? How would the project contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change?

Cultural and Heritage Resources: What is the potential for impacts to historic or ancestral Native American objects, artifacts, or sites? How would the project affect the Stibnite National Historic District, which is included in the National Register of Historic Places for its historic context?

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice: How would the project contribute to direct and indirect social and

economic impacts and benefits, including those to special use permit holders? Would the project disproportionately affect minority or low income populations?

Hazardous Materials, Human Health and Safety and Noise:

How would public health and safety issues resulting from increased ore transportation, potential chemical spills or fires, increased access in the project area or reclamation of previously contaminated areas be minimized? How would noise from new construction and expanded operations be minimized?

Soils, Botanical Resources, Vegetation and Timber: How will the project minimize impacts to riparian, wetland and upland vegetation communities and sensitive species? How will the project control the spread of invasive species? How will the project development and restoration affect timber resources?

EIS Analysis Considerations

The EIS will identify and take into consideration the applicant-committed environmental protection measures designed to minimize impacts to these resources. Additional mitigation measures may be identified based on the results of the impact analysis.



Stibnite Gold Project



How to Comment

You may submit written scoping comments by any of the following methods:

By Website

Comment link at

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold>

By Fax

ATTN: Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom- Stibnite Gold EIS at
1-208-634-0744

By Email

Email to comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us

Include Subject Line: "Stibnite Gold EIS Scoping Comment"

At This Meeting

Comment forms are available to fill out and leave with the Forest Service tonight or mail via USPS.

U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Mail

Mail a completed/stamped comment form or letter to:

Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom- Stibnite Gold EIS
Payette National Forest
500 N. Mission St., Bldg 2
McCall, ID 83638

Effective Public Commenting: The most helpful comments are those that are timely, specific, and actionable in regard to the **content of the EIS**. Examples include: 1) new data or information regarding the affected environment or analysis methodologies; 2) a specific resource concern that should be analyzed in the EIS; 3) an alternative element that meets the purpose and need statement and should be considered in the range of alternatives; or 4) mitigation or other suggestions to reduce impacts.

WRITTEN COMMENTS ARE REQUESTED BY JULY 20, 2017.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered, however.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following pages contain the information in a Frequently Asked Questions document that will be distributed at the public scoping meetings.

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WHAT IS THE STIBNITE GOLD PROJECT?

Midas Gold submitted a plan of operations for mining on National Forest System (NFS) lands, titled “Stibnite Gold Plan of Restoration and Operations” (Plan) to the Forest Service in September 2016, in accordance with Forest Service regulations for locatable minerals set forth at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 Subpart A. Midas Gold’s stated objective is to economically develop and operate a modern mine, while providing environmental restoration of impacts related to historic mining activities at the site and socioeconomic benefits in surrounding areas. Midas Gold’s Plan includes descriptions of the following operations and activities to be implemented on a mixture of NFS, State, and private lands:

- **Redevelopment and Construction (2 to 3 years):** Developing supporting infrastructure, including upgraded and reconstructed powerline, communication sites, upgraded and new roads (including a long-term, temporary mine access and public by-pass route), maintenance facility, and onsite housing, oxygen plant, and water management infrastructure; relocation and reuse of spent ore and construction of a lined tailings storage facility; modifying stream channels to reduce sedimentation and restore wetland function and fish passage (including temporarily rerouting the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River [EFSFSR] through a fish-passable tunnel); planting burned areas; initial mining of one open pit (which will require closure of the Stibnite

road through the mine site); and developing rock storage and temporary ore stockpile facilities, crusher, and ore processing facilities.

- **Mining and Ore Processing (12 to 15 years):** Resuming mining from two historical and one new open pit at a rate of approximately 40,000 to 100,000 tons of material per day; processing up to 25,000 tons per day of ore to recover gold/silver doré and antimony concentrate; historical tailings reprocessing and clean-up; placing neutralized new and reprocessed tailings in the tailings storage facility; placing development rock in four engineered facilities, backfilling Yellow Pine pit; and concurrent reconstruction of stream channels, riparian areas, wetlands, and upland habitat, including restoring the EFSFSR to its approximate original gradient across the backfilled Yellow Pine pit.
- **Initial Closure and Reclamation (2 to 3 years):** Removing structures and facilities; decommissioning temporary roads; recontouring and drainage; additional wetland mitigations; reconstructing various stream channels in the project area and reopening the Stibnite Road through the mine site; and growth media placement and revegetation.
- **Post-Closure and Monitoring (5 to 7 years):** Establishing a wetland on top of the tailings storage facility; reclaiming rock storage facilities; monitoring reclamation and remediation projects.

The Plan includes operational standards and practices to minimize, mitigate or eliminate the potential for negative impacts and also includes environmental monitoring to document compliance and facilitate adaptive management through the redevelopment, mining, reclamation, and post-closure periods.

The project area is located in the upper East Fork South Fork Salmon River (EFSFSR) drainage approximately 44 air miles northeast of the city of Cascade and three miles west of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in Valley County, Idaho. Operations would impact approximately 500 acres of patented mining claims owned or controlled by Midas Gold and approximately 1,500 acres of Federal public lands comprised of adjacent NFS lands administered by the Payette National Forest (PNF) in the historic Stibnite Mining District and two supporting-infrastructure corridors located primarily in the Boise National Forest (BNF).

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FOREST SERVICE AND OTHER AGENCIES IN THIS PROJECT?

In order to comply with its statutory and regulatory obligations to respond to a mining Plan submitted by Midas Gold, the Forest Service must: (1) Evaluate the Plan; (2) consider requirements set forth at 36 CFR 228.8, including those to minimize adverse effects to the extent feasible, comply with applicable laws, regulations, and standards for environmental protection,

and provide for reclamation; and (3) respond to the Plan as set forth at 36 CFR 228.5(a). The Forest Service fulfills these obligations by analyzing and disclosing the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The PNF, acting as the **Lead Agency**, is preparing an **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** to evaluate and disclose the potential environmental effects from: (1) Approval of the Plan submitted by Midas Gold in September 2016, to occupy and use (NFS) lands for operations associated with open-pit mining and ore processing; and (2) related amendments to the Payette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Payette Forest Plan, 2003) and/or the Boise National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Boise Forest Plan, as amended in 2010).

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will cooperate on the preparation of the EIS and evaluate its content to ensure that the EIS can be adopted by the USACE to support an eventual decision to either issue, issue with conditions, or deny a Department of the Army Permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) for the Plan. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will cooperate on the preparation of the EIS and evaluate its content to ensure that the EIS can be adopted in support of the decision-making process for issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit under Section 402 of the CWA. The PNF will evaluate Midas Gold's Plan and decide whether to approve the Plan, as submitted or as reasonably modified to meet regulatory requirements for environmental protection, based on the analysis of the Proposed Action and alternatives in the EIS. The Forest Supervisor of the PNF has been delegated authority for decisions related to the Plan on the BNF and will be the Responsible Official who prepares the Record of Decision (ROD) necessary to approve the portions of the Plan on NFS lands.

A “**Cooperating agency**” is an agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal (or a reasonable alternative). A cooperating agency typically will have some responsibilities for the EIS analysis related to its jurisdiction or special expertise, and will use that analysis to inform relevant permitting decisions, as applicable. These responsibilities are defined in a memorandum of understanding with the Forest Service. To date, five cooperating agencies have been identified:

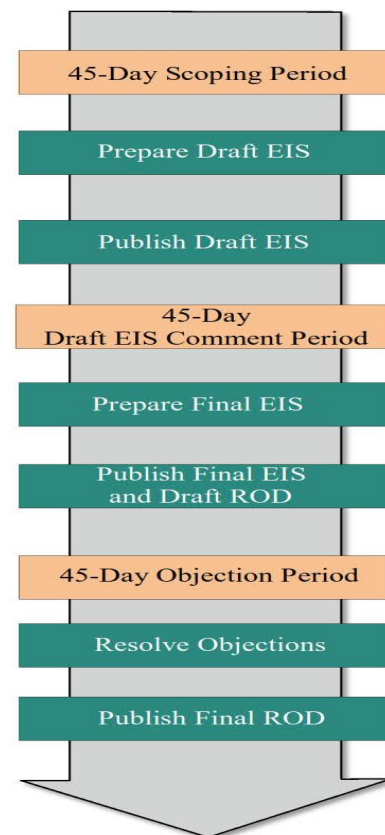
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** has special expertise regarding NEPA compliance. Decisions to be made include whether, and under what conditions, to issue a CWA NPDES Permit, approve the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE):** has jurisdiction over waters of the United States (WUS), including wetlands. The USACE's decision to be made will be whether, and under what conditions, to issue a CWA Section 404 permit for discharge of dredged or fill material into WUS.

- **Governor’s Office of Energy and Mineral Resources:** coordinates and cooperates with federal and state agencies, departments and divisions on issues concerning the State’s mineral supply and management.
- **Idaho Department of Lands (IDL):** regulates and has special expertise in surface mining and reclamation on all lands in the State of Idaho, and provides approval of the Mining Operation Plan, Reclamation Plan and Reclamation Financial assurance.
- **Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ):** has special expertise in surface and ground water quality, cyanidation operations, hazardous and solid waste management, and air quality and has jurisdiction over the following permits: Air Quality Permit to Construct, Air Quality Operating Permit, Cyanidation Permit, Wastewater Treatment Permit, Groundwater Rule Permit, Drinking Water Permit, Water Treatment permits, and Solid Waste permits.

A **third-party contractor**, AECOM, has been selected to assist the PNF help carry out the Forest Service’s NEPA responsibilities, including public outreach and preparation of the EIS and other associated environmental documents.

WHAT IS NEPA?

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), is a procedural Act aimed at ensuring that environmental information is available to the public and to public officials before decisions are made and actions taken. The implementation of this Act is commonly referred to as “the NEPA process” or “the environmental impact assessment process.” The NEPA process must be completed **before** an agency makes a final decision on a proposed action. The level of impact assessment that is required varies by project type and scope; a federal agency must prepare an EIS if it is proposing a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The accompanying graphic outlines the key phases associated with the Stibnite Gold Project EIS Process.



NEPA is...

- A formal structured process prior to federal decision-making
- Provides for public involvement in federal decisions
- Requires development and analysis of alternatives to a proposed federal action
- Requires federal agency to analyze and disclose effects in an environmental document

NEPA is not...

- A voting process or other measure of relative support or opposition to a proposed action
- Does not provide a federal agency with decision-making authority
- Does not overrule other federal laws

Additional resources on NEPA can be found here:

- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/nepa>
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nepa/>
- https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/get-involved/Citizens_Guide_Dec07.pdf

WHAT IS PUBLIC SCOPING AND HOW CAN I BEST PARTICIPATE?

Scoping is the initial phase of NEPA process, during which agencies and the public “scope” issues related to the proposed project. This input regarding project and resource concerns is used to identify “issues” to be addressed through alternatives development or EIS analysis. An **issue** is a point of uncertainty, disagreement or dispute about an effect that would be caused by the Project. The best way to participate in scoping is to

- Read about the project online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold> or provide written comments at a public scoping meeting
- Ask questions and express your concerns freely and openly
- Provide written comments to help the Forest Service develop a comprehensive EIS

The most helpful comments you can provide are those that are specific and actionable in regard to the content of the EIS. Examples include: 1) new data or information regarding the affected environment or analysis methodologies; 2) a specific resource concern that should be analyzed in

the EIS; 3) an alternative element that meets the purpose and need statement and should be considered in the range of alternatives; or 4) mitigation or other suggestions to reduce impacts.

Example: “The EIS should consider the potential for acid rock drainage to leak into underground aquifers and to contaminate springs and other water sources downstream.”

Comments are *least* helpful when they simply express a personal opinion, address issues that are beyond the scope of this project or the beyond the legal authority of the Forest Service to influence or change.

Example: “Mining is terribly destructive. Mining should not be allowed on any Forest lands.”

While these types of comments are noted and recorded, they do not help the Forest Service with development of the EIS.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTION PROCESS?

The draft decision for the project and activities are subject to the pre-decisional objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B, “Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process”. The regulation provides that “all interested and affected parties who provided written comment as defined in §218.2 during scoping or the comment period will be eligible to participate in the objections process.” Depending on the nature of the forest plan amendments required, the draft decisions may also be subject to 36 CFR 219 Subpart B, “Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process.”

The Forest Service's objection process provides an opportunity for members of the public who have participated in the planning process to have any unresolved concerns reviewed by the Forest Service prior to a final decision by the Responsible Official. An objection typically includes a statement of the issues and/or parts of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to which the objection applies; an explanation of the objections and suggestions as to how the draft plan decision may be improved (or an explanation of why the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy), and a statement that demonstrates the link between the objector's prior substantive formal comments and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment.

Only those who provided **substantive formal comments** during previous opportunities for public comment during the planning process are eligible to file an objection. Comments are considered substantive when they are within the scope of the proposal, are specific to the proposal, have a direct relationship to the proposal, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

To be eligible to submit an objection, individuals and entities must also have provided the following during the comment period: 1) name and postal address (email address is recommended but not required; 2) title of the proposed project or activity; 3) specific written comments as defined in §218.2 regarding the proposed project or activity, along with supporting reasons, and 4) signature or other verification of identity upon request and identification of the individual or entity who authored the comments. For comments listed multiple entities or multiple individuals, a signature or other means of verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each entry and for each individual in the case of multiple names. A scanned signature or other means of verifying the identity of the individual or entity representative may be used for electronically submitted comments. Individual members of an entity must submit their own comments to establish personal identity; comments received on behalf of an entity are considered as those of the entity only.

WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT MY SCOPING COMMENTS?

Comments can be submitted via the project webpage at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold> by selecting the ‘Comment on Project’ link on the right side of the page.

While Webform submission of comments is encouraged, you may also submit written scoping comments by any of the following methods:

- Submit a comment form or letter at a public scoping meeting
- By email: comments-intermt-n-payette@fs.fed.us, with a subject line reading “Stibnite Gold EIS Scoping Comment”
- By Fax: ATTN: Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom- Stibnite Gold EIS at 1-208-634-0744
- U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Mail: Mail a completed/stamped comment form or letter to:

Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom- Stibnite Gold EIS
500 N. Mission St., Bldg 2, McCall, ID 83638

Scoping comments are requested by **July 20, 2017**. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however as noted above, 36 CFR 218 requires comments to contain certain identifiers in order to be eligible to file an objection (see Objection Process, above, or a description of requirements).

AFTER SCOPING, WHEN IS THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT?

After conclusion of the scoping period, the Forest Service will develop the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will identify different alternatives that meet the Forest Service purpose and need and address issues identified during the scoping process; disclose the effects of each alternative on the natural and human environment; and identify mitigation that may be applied to reduce impacts. The Draft EIS is expected to be released in 2018. Following publication of the Draft EIS, the Forest Service will hold a 45-day **Draft EIS public comment period** to allow the public to review the Draft EIS and provide comments on the proposed action and alternatives, and the analysis contained in the EIS document. The Forest Service will hold public meetings during this time to allow the public to discuss the EIS with Forest Service resource specialists.

For more information, contact Brian Harris, Public Affairs Officer, at 1-208-634-0784 or bdharris@fs.fed.us, or visit the project website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/payette/StibniteGold>.